THE SPIRITUAL POWERS AND THE WAR

BY

A. P. SINNETT

Author of
"The Occult World," "Esoteric Buddhism,"
"The Growth of the Soul,"
Etc., Etc.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Character of the War	7
Sir Oliver Lodge and the Holy War	10
Mrs Besant and the Issue of the War	13
The Powers of Good and of Evil	15
Legacies from Atlantis	16
Germany and the Dark Powers	26
National Karma and Suffering	28
Spiritual Duties and the War	32
Human Brotherhood	41
Killed in Action	44
Vengeance is Mine	49
The Triumph of Right	52
Appendix	56

THE SPIRITUAL POWERS AND THE WAR

The Character of the War

The war now raging almost all over Europe is obviously the most terrible conflict in which civilised nations have ever been engaged. Some of us used to think the machinery of war to be so highly developed that it would defeat its own purpose, making the nations afraid to face the awful slaughter modern war would render inevitable. Events, however, have disconcerted this belief. Germany has been willing to sacrifice millions of her own people in the hope of dominating other nations, and is powerful enough to strain the resources of several great Powers, compelled to unite their strength in resisting her aggression.

But the circumstances that have sur-

rounded the aggression would have been bewildering to an unintelligible degree if we regarded them as merely arising from the national ambitions of Germans, however extravagant. Nothing in the past history of Germany prepared us for the outrages on all the conventions of civilised warfare, on all the dictates of common humanity that have disgraced the methods of the German armies from the beginning of their attack on Belgium and France. International good faith and Germany's own plighted word are set at defiance by the invasion of Belgium and the treatment of its unhappy people. When they resisted the violation of their neutrality, the invasion degenerated into an outburst of barbarism. Spurred on by their leaders, the German troops have murdered helpless civilians and outraged innumerable women with refinements of cruelty that sicken imagination. The reports of the French and Belgian Commissions appointed to investigate these atrocities confirm the worst rumours in circulation with elaborate detail. The Belgian report, when complete, will no doubt be the more ghastly record of the two;

but the French report, relating merely to the crimes perpetrated in that region of France occupied by the Germans for a time, and from which they have since been driven back, covers some forty-five columns of the *Journal Officiel*, equivalent to about twenty columns of the *Times* newspaper. And the narrative, simply relating to the crimes actually perpetrated, is not expanded in any way by comment or expression of indignant feeling.[1] At first, when rumours faintly foreshadowing these narratives were creeping into circulation, many of us refused to believe them on the general principle that the German character was incompatible with belief in the stories told. All our lives we have been in the habit of thinking of the Germans generally as an amiable, domestic race, perhaps too fond of military discipline, but orderly and submissive to law, human and divine. What is the meaning of their sudden relapse into barbarism? The

[1] It seems desirable to fortify this statement with definite quotations, but more convenient to give these in an appendix (to which I refer the reader) rather than to insert them here.

teaching of some writers frequently quoted was certainly of a kind calculated to corrupt the national character, but from what curious springs of tendency did that teaching arise? How could it have become successful in converting German soldiers in large numbers into agents of cruelty, capable of deeds eclipsing the ferocity even of medieval warfare? No mere consideration of political development can in any way illuminate this bewildering mystery. We have to plunge deeply into the regions of super-physical mystery before we can begin to understand the true character of the war raging around us.

Sir Oliver Lodge and the Holy War

This has been well defined in its broad outlines by Sir Oliver Lodge in the course of an address delivered at the Browning Hall in November last as the first of a series of addresses on "Science and Religion" by seven men of science, all in the front rank of distinction. Sir Oliver recognises the possibility of cultivating faculties which give us "help and assistance in understanding things which else would be beyond us."

And summing up the results of inspiration induced by such means, he says :—

"We all know that there are powers of good and powers of evil. We all know, because we are fighting them at the present time. Why are we fighting this, the holiest war that we were ever engaged in? Because the powers of evil are loose, 'spiritual wickedness in high places,' and in fighting them we are agents of God. It is a holy war. What is the doctrine opposed to us? That there is nothing higher than the State, that the State is the summit of everything, and that the State is entitled to do whatever it pleases, if it is conducive to its benefit. No moral law, no existence higher than a powerful State! Well, that is practical Atheism. That is what we are at war with. If we had to live under the domination of a State like that, if the world ever came under such a domination, life would not be worth having. In literal truth, it would be far better to die than to live under such domination as that. We know that there is a moral government of the world. We know that there are high ideals: our enemy is taught otherwise. Our troops—how splendidly they are behaving—could not do the horrible, the treacherous, the abominably cruel things that these

people have done with this belief forced upon them, under this kind of coercion and falsity of belief. We are sometimes told of the importance of right belief and the damnation that follows wrong belief. There is a great truth in that, though not as many people have thought it. But you see it going on now. Right belief gives us strength, determination, and energy, and such vigour that we are irresistible and cannot be overcome. The other belief must succumb. The powers of good are stronger than the powers of evil."

Going on, Sir Oliver realises in this way that we are "agents of the deity," that "our help is wanted in resisting forces of evil." And then he interprets the growth of these evil powers in a way which occult students will recognise as correctly summing up the facts in a few words: "When free will was granted to creatures, they had the power of going wrong as well as the power of going right." I propose to expand that simple statement at considerable length; but, in half a dozen words, it embodies the all-important truth underlying the culmination of evil growth with the climax of

which we are now contending. But I am tempted, in the first instance, to quote some passages from an admirable survey of the situation put forward by Mrs Besant in the November number of the *Theosophist.*

Mrs Besant and the Issue of the War

She describes the present war as a conflict between two ideals in a way which differentiates it from all the other wars associated with "the brief history of the West." The one ideal stands for freedom, for increasing self-government, for power broad-based upon the people's will, the fair and just treatment of undeveloped races, civilisation co-operative, peaceful, progressive—a brotherhood of nations. This ideal is shown to be identical with the history of Great Britain, and at the present moment Great Britain "is fighting in defence of keeping faith with those too small to exact it, in defence of treaty obligations and the sanctity of a nation's pledged word, in defence of national honour . . . the only safeguard of society against the tyranny of brute strength." Of course the other ideal is represented by the

blasphemous claims of the German War Lord to be the chosen agent of God in establishing a world-empire by force. Its own self-interest is declared to be the only motive guiding the German Empire. "All religions save the religion of force are superstitious, their morality is outgrown. Murder, robbery, arson, all are permissible, no, praiseworthy in invading hosts . . . the women, the children, the aged, they are all weak, why should not strong men use them as they will?" I quote merely a few passages from Mrs Besant's splendid outburst, which I could wish disseminated more fully throughout the civilised world.

Without explicitly dealing with the occult side of the situation she describes, the article shows how, from a mere physical plane point of view, the struggle can be realised as a conflict between mighty principles represented on other planes of consciousness, by those we speak of as the powers of good and evil. And now it seems desirable to investigate more closely the circumstances under which those mighty powers have been developed through the

long ages that have already passed since the beginning of human evolution.

The Powers of Good and of Evil

Occult students have long been aware in a general way that a spiritual hierarchy presides, under divine guidance, over the evolution of humanity on this planet, and is resisted on all planes of activity by a formidable organisation, itself persistently inspired by the desire to impede the spiritual progress of the human race; to retard, if possible to defeat, the divine scheme altogether; to engender suffering instead of happiness; to stimulate every evil passion by which humanity can be influenced; to spread confusion and misery as far as this may be possible throughout the whole world. Those belonging to this organisation must not be thought of as included in the divine scheme for the sake of creating difficulty, held by some thinkers to be a necessary condition of human spiritual progress. The conquest of difficulty is one of the methods by which human spiritual progress may be achieved, it is not the only method. It might conceivably be possible

that humanity could advance towards higher conditions of life and consciousness along the paths of harmony and peace. But in so far as it was essential to the realisation of the whole divine idea that each member of the vast human family should be invested with free will, it became almost inevitable to suppose that some, as Sir Oliver Lodge has suggested, would use that free will for evil purposes. Thus the dark powers, developed in the manner I propose to describe, must be thought of as constituting an excrescence on the divine scheme, and the knowledge we now possess concerning the early history of mankind on this planet enables us actually to trace the conditions under which their evil history has been accomplished.

Legacies from Atlantis

To understand the matter aright we have to go back in imagination to the earliest conditions of human life representing anything that we can think of at present as corresponding to that expression. Occult teaching enables us to realise beginnings that lie too far back in the past to be recog-

nised by us now as human in their character; but for the purposes I have in view, it is enough to go back to the early period of the great Atlantian race which occupied the world under conditions of geography wholly unlike those with which we are now acquainted for millions of years before the beginnings of the civilisation to which the historical period relates. We are gradually getting used to handling long periods of time in imagination, now that the intelligence of modern thinking is fairly well extricated from the literal acceptance of biblical chronology. So I need not make the reader gasp by referring to the now well-known fact (well known, at all events, to all occult students) that the Atlantian race began some four million years before the period associated with the final catastrophe that submerged the last great fragment of the Atlantian Continent more than nine thousand years before the Christian era. The human race was still in its infancy at the beginning of the great Atlantian period, and, as occult history has long enabled us to realise, our infant humanity was nursed, ruled over, and guided by superior

beings, representing a senior evolution, competent to migrate to this earth and assume incarnations amongst its people, although representing developments of progress only as yet attained to amongst ourselves by those constituting the spiritual hierarchy referred to in occult literature as the masters of wisdom or the members of the great White Lodge. These semi-divine rulers of our infant humanity were naturally regarded by the undeveloped people around them with awe, wonder, and admiration. As time gradually passed and their influence began to work, some amongst the Atlantian people realised the moral splendour as well as the power they represented and began to be governed by the beautiful aspirations suggested by their example. That was the beginning, or, at all events, may be thought of for the purpose of the present explanation as the beginning of white adeptship amongst our own humanity. But concurrently with that development, some of the early Atlantian people were inspired by a selfishly covetous desire to exercise the power they saw attached to the condition of the semi-

divine visitants. Power could clearly be directed towards the fulfilment of any desires they might entertain, and when this was aimed at merely for its own sake, even though in the first instance there was no conscious desire to engender evil, the effort may be thought of as representing the beginning, the very early beginning, of the evil organisation that has since attained such stupendous magnitude.

There is no difficulty in understanding its gradual conversion into a stream of influence actually antagonistic to human welfare. Power exercised in the first instance merely to secure some selfish purpose may soon become indifferent to the welfare of others, at whose expense perhaps the personal object may be sought. Then by slow degrees indifference to the welfare of others becomes a normal attitude of mind. Few of us can easily realise the way in which that indifference becomes gradually coloured by not merely inactive but positive cruelty. But whether the change is easily understood or not, it has undeniably proceeded towards an ultimately stupendous culmination. All of

us who have studied Atlantian history are familiar with the idea that the magicians of that period were an evil race. We have, perhaps, been insufficiently alive to the fact that concurrently with their development the White Lodge of Atlantis assumed a highly important development, but for the moment what we have to do is to understand the progress of the dark devotees. In the millions of years that elapsed from the beginnings I have endeavoured to describe to the final catastrophe of Poseidonis, the dark powers had been developed with such fearful excess that they actually became a danger threatening the whole divine scheme of human evolution. As an excrescence on that scheme, they had to be, so to speak, surgically removed. The task was not one representing serious difficulty for the spiritual hierarchy normally concerned with the guidance of affairs in this world. Although the semi-divine rulers of the senior evolution were no longer active in incarnation amongst the people, they had by no means relinquished all their duties in connection with human progress. As unseen rulers some of them

still exercised power from lofty altitudes of existence, and when it became necessary to exterminate the dark wisdom generated by the magicians of Atlantis, and concentrated in that great fragment of the old continent referred to by the name quoted above, the terrible work was easily accomplished by a geographical convulsion.

How, some of us may ask, could the mere drowning of the dark hosts put an end to their influence in the world? Like the many millions of perfectly innocent people who were drowned at the same time, they would reincarnate again surely with their old tendencies. Yes, but without finding, when reincarnated, teachers of their own kind ready to restore the precise evil knowledge which they had acquired before the catastrophe. That had been wiped out for the time being. Mankind had again an opportunity, had it been collectively wise enough to avail itself thereof, of proceeding with the evolution of the next great race along the paths of harmony and peace. In point of fact, a crisis had been reached and passed, analogous in many ways to that

which we are now called upon to deal with. Dark power had reached a pitch that rendered it necessary for the welfare of all that certain exponents of misdirected ambition should be exterminated. And that was done. Then, unhappily, in the many thousand years that have elapsed since then, the evil germs brought over from the Atlantian period have given rise to a new harvest of evil power, to the growth of a dark host immeasurably more dangerous to humanity than their predecessors who were dealt with in the Atlantian catastrophe. The race to which we now belong, and within which those whom we now speak of as the powers of evil have grown up, is active on much higher levels than were possibly attained to by the magicians of the Atlantian period. Putting the matter technically, in the Atlantian period dark magic power was concerned merely with the astral plane. In our period it has associated itself with complete efficiency on the manasic plane, and is thus more formidable to an extent which commonplace imagination hardly enables us to realise. Once more the crisis is upon us. Once more

a situation has arisen in which the divine purpose underlying human evolution must altogether be shipwrecked, or those who are aiming at its destruction must themselves be destroyed. The gradual accomplishment of that awful retribution is going on above us while the war we see is raging below, and, for those of us who can appreciate the energy of unseen forces, it is really the greater war of the two to an extent which it would be difficult for language to exaggerate. But let not anyone vainly imagine, in reference to the war above, that it is one which aims at making peace on terms with an enemy. The future of the world depends upon the final extermination of that enemy, the banishment from this world finally and altogether of those mighty entities aiming at its ruin.

And the reason why the white powers, with whom, happily, we who are concerned with the theosophical movement are much better acquainted than with their awful rivals, are entirely confident of ultimate success in the fearful struggle in which they are engaged, is because they know that divine power reigning over the whole solar

system, far above the normal spiritual agencies which guide the affairs of this planet, does not intend to allow the whole scheme of its evolution to be ruined, but is investing them with powers greater than even those they normally exercise, which will certainly be sufficient in the end to determine the victory of good over evil. And even an imperfect appreciation of the ideas I have been endeavouring to set forth will help us to realise how absolutely unprecedented in all respects is the mighty war on the physical plane that is in process of deluging the greater part of Europe with blood and suffering. For, of course, the dark host is only at war with the white powers on higher levels because it has at last attempted to realise its awful purposes on the physical plane. Many subtle considerations come here into play. One may ask first of all why it is that the powers of good have patiently waited until now, when the powers of evil have, as I have described, attained to heights of influence which make them so fearfully formidable? Why were they not attacked at an earlier period and ex-

terminated before reaching the fearful heights they have now attained? Because it would seem, for some mysterious laws ruling the higher world, the white powers must wait until they are attacked before actually putting forth their strength with the view of exterminating the enemy. For long past it has been known in the higher regions of the occult world that the awful crisis we are now passing through was appointed for this or about this period. That is the explanation of the bewildering accuracy with which the war now in progress has actually been foretold—in some cases centuries ago; in others, at all events, long before it was foreseen by practical politicians. It was known both by the leaders of the light and dark forces that the period we are now passing through, was—for subtle reasons it is hardly possible for us to understand, much less to interpret—favourable to the activity of the evil powers. This period was therefore chosen long in advance by the leaders on that side; known to have been so chosen by others who, in some cases, no doubt conveyed their knowledge to the

psychically receptive authors of some of the bygone prophecies that have interested many of us lately. And, of course, preparation has been going on for the terrific outbreak we are now concerned with for many a long year. And this thought brings us to the consideration of the motives which have inspired the dark powers with their choice of instruments on this physical plane of activity.

Germany and the Dark Powers

As I have said already, the change in the German character, which the progress of the war has revealed as going on, is bewildering and almost inexplicable by any commonplace reasoning. It is true that writers like Clausewitch, Treitschke, and Bernhardi are credited by public opinion amongst us as having gradually educated the German people into the attitude of mind represented by the shameless brutality of certain general orders issued to the German armies. But from the occult point of view the writers quoted above were merely the earlier victims of the dark inspiration that had selected the

German people to be the agents of its terrible will. True, there must have been seeds within the German character that made it possible for the dark influences to attain the complete control they ultimately acquired. We need not think even of the original ego incarnated as the German Emperor as including the diabolical attributes his ultimate behaviour and utterances have exhibited. But there must have been possibilities in his nature rendering him accessible to the influences which ultimately took complete possession and have rendered him from some time antecedent to the actual outbreak of this war a mere tool, one might almost say a mere telephone, giving expression to the will and thoughts of the obsessing power. And, with modifications of course, the same idea applies to a great number amongst the German leaders; in varying degrees of intensity to vast numbers. Then, again, the teaching of the writers quoted above, supplemented by stimuli emanating from the obsessed leaders of the current period, will go far to enable us to understand the attitude of German opinion, which really, considered without

reference to these subtle unseen forces, would be utterly beyond comprehension.

National Karma and Suffering

Recognising the unseen forces, however, we begin to understand that the crisis represented by this war is not merely unprecedented, but lying altogether outside the national Karma of the nations involved in it on this plane. This is an extremely important idea to keep in view. As we contemplate the awful martyrdom of the Belgian people, some of us begin to grope in their past history in search of causes that might be regarded as engendering the actual suffering. No such causes are to be found. The suffering of Belgium is not karmic in any sense worth talking of. It is due entirely to the great effort of the dark powers to upset civilisation. In the same way, the other nations who are suffering in various ways through the war, collectively and individually, are being afflicted with trouble they have not karmically earned. Does all this mean that the law of Karma we have hitherto been regarding as so in-

susceptible of disturbance has somehow broken down? No conclusion of the kind is involved in what I have just been saying. The law of Karma is continually operative to readjust the disturbances to which, in the midst of a people possessing free will, it is inevitably subject all the time. The notion that some people seem to have, that the law of Karma means that nothing can happen without what may be thought of as a justifiable cause, is a misapprehension of the sublimely elastic system under which evolution is carried on. In the long, long run it is perfectly certain that absolute justice will prevail. But anyone who imagines that at any given moment in the world's history absolute justice is operative, misunderstands the scheme altogether. Injustice is continually arising from the vagaries of human will; as continually readjusted in time by the indirect agency working out divine will in human affairs. But at any given moment there may be disturbances, and the present moment in the world's history is one which is in presence of the most colossal disturbance that has

ever afflicted this world since it became a region of human activity.

How will the compensations of Karma in the future be worked out? What compensation can conceivably be imagined for the victims, young and old, male and female, of German barbarity, guided by the terrible forces in the background? Obviously it is impossible for this life to provide compensation for those outraged and murdered under conditions of agonising cruelty. It is true that happiness on higher planes after death may go some way towards affording compensation; but our sense of justice remains discontented with that idea, which again seems most inadequate to deal with cases of mutilation and misery that do not end life, or with other cases where grief for loved ones lost is protracted and intense. The only effective interpretation of the mystery has to do with an adequate recognition of the fact that each one life is merely, from the point of view of divine law, one page in a book, very blotted it may be, but other pages are available for totally different inscriptions. And as far as suffering nations

are concerned, in the vast stretches of time lying before us in the future there are possibilities of compensation that may be fairly recognised as adequate.

And in association with that idea, we have to recognise and appreciate occult information relating to periods beyond even the furthest possible protraction of the war actually in progress. Civilisation, outraged by the fearful attack it is now so painfully resisting, has to be compensated by the ultimate progress of events in Europe, and will be so compensated undoubtedly in a way we are already enabled to some extent to understand. I do not mean merely that political probabilities foreseen may point to a healthier organisation of European States than any which the military history of the past has foreshadowed. Influences, we are led confidently to believe, will rain down upon mankind after the war is over which will bring about new conditions of social and international well being. In more technical language, which all occult students will understand, we shall be after the war in closer touch with the Buddhic plane

than at this stage of human evolution we were normally entitled to be. That will be the collective compensation afforded to the world for the horrors through which it is passing, and that collective blessing will culminate towards the close of the century in conditions of social harmony, international security, intellectual progress and moral developments which will invest the last quarter of the period with glories corresponding in beauty to the horrors at the other end of the scale which the first quarter of the century has been, I will not say destined, but caused to endure.

Spiritual Duties and the War

Meanwhile, reverting to the terrible conditions through which we are actually passing, we have to consider how far it is possible to reconcile with the emotions, or even with the passions, that the present war evokes, the great principles of universal brotherhood and love for all our fellow-creatures, which cannot but have an eternal significance and must be reconcilable with any emergencies, however abnormal, which arise in the course

of human life. And the first idea, perhaps, which it is well to bear in mind, is one which applies to individual life when the practical difficulties and duties we have to deal with seem on the face of things in conflict with those efforts the aspirant to spiritual progress is eager to engage in, with a view of ultimate development in realms of existence superior to the physical plane. Without any doubt or equivocation, the highest teachings which the great theosophical movement has conveyed to us emphasise the principle applicable to everyone desirous of achieving spiritual progress, which points to the necessity, in the first instance, of fulfilling the ordinary duties of life, whatever complicated conditions of existence may surround the aspirant. If the fulfilment of these seems to interfere with lofty studies or practices of meditation pointing to spiritual culture, the aspirant must put these last aside for the time being and attend to the practical work imposed upon him by the Karma he is working out—in other words, by the surrounding circumstances of his life. No one can make

spiritual progress by neglecting mundane duty. The zealous fulfilment of such duty, in cases where at the first glance it may seem in conflict with loftier purposes, is itself conducive in disguise, so to speak, to the fulfilment of the loftier purpose.

On a huge scale this idea applies to the position in which the Allied Nations find themselves at this moment in conflict with the menace of German ambition. For the moment, though only for the moment, we may leave out of account the dark forces in the background which invest the present war with a character which has attached to no previous struggle in the history of the world. Facing the situation as illuminating the practical duty imposed upon the nations resisting the stupendous German aggression, there can be no question as to the method by which the resistance is to be accomplished. No thought concerning fundamental principles of human brotherhood must stand in the way of naval and military operations designed to drive back and overwhelm the attack, even though these involve the horrible necessity of slaughtering multitudes

amongst whom large numbers may be individually innocent of all malevolent intention. The Allied Nations need never stain their honour by imitating the barbarous ferocities of which, unhappily, the attacking forces have been guilty, even without any military advantage in view. But in order to attempt the reconciliation of the loftiest ethical principles with the immediate duties of the moment, we have to consider the whole situation, first as practical politicians, in order to ascertain clearly what are for the nations, on a great scale, the mundane duties that have to be fulfilled in the first instance, while loftier aspirations are for the moment put aside, along the lines of the analogy suggested above between private and national obligations. We see that the curse which has been resting so long over civilisation has arisen from the fearful development of preparations for war imposed as a necessity on all the civilised world, because of the extent to which they have been carried out, as a manifest threat directed against the welfare of other States, by the mighty organisation described as the Empire

of Germany. While the aggressive spirit which, from its first organisation as a military unity, that Empire has represented is allowed to arm itself with stupendous military power, the nations threatened must sacrifice all other purposes to a corresponding preparation for defence. When we look back upon the splendid contributions to civilisation, to literature, art, philosophical thought, and scientific industry which Germany has given to the world in former days, when consisting of numerous separate States, none of which dreamed individually of dominance over the rest, we can see clearly how that which has become the curse of the world as emanating from Germany has arisen entirely from the unification of all those States into one great military organisation. Separately, the various states of Germany have till now been factors in the civilisation of the world. In the aggregate they have represented the revival of barbarism, of brutal strength transcending all other human characteristics. There can be no doubt as to the duty now imposed upon the Allied Nations, with the ultimate meaning of German unity blazing

forth in all its terrible significance. The task we have to accomplish—and that has been bravely recognised by all exponents of British feeling, however little, through the prevalence of party spirit, they have been inclined to unite in one opinion — is the destruction of that evil unity, the reversion to a state of things in which the separate States of Germany may once more play their respective parts in the great drama of moral and intellectual progress.

That is what is meant by a phrase sometimes misunderstood, the breaking up of the German Empire. That phrase, properly understood, does not convey any idea of hostility to the German people; but simply a determination to set them free from the horribly perverted purpose that has become associated with their military unity. There can be no question about the practical duty thus imposed on the Allied Nations. Misunderstanding of such beautiful phrases as universal brotherhood sometimes leads generous enthusiasts to resent the apparent ferocity of such phrases as fighting out this war to a finish, freely used in accordance

with the sound instinct by patriotic enthusiasts little accustomed to measure their policy against sublime maxims derived from spiritual thinking. We are in arms, not against any one specific object represented by the activity of our enemy, we are in arms against a principle. The duty we have to perform would not be fulfilled by making peace with the enemy. The enemy, be it here clearly understood, is not the aggregation of German-speaking people, but the terrible inspiration by which it has come to pass that they are guided.

The whole purpose with which I am putting forward these comments on the situation before us, has to do with the emphasis of that principle. It is recognised in connection with that loftier war on the higher planes going on all the time between the powers of good and evil. As I have already endeavoured to show, the nature of that struggle is not one which has to do with the idea of making a peace. There is no peace, that is to say, there is no compromise conceivable as between the purposes of those who subserve the divine idea of human

evolution and the purposes of those who desire to wreck and destroy it altogether. It can only proceed along its appointed path by sweeping aside once for all the obstacles which thus impede its progress. The mighty spiritual combatants identified on higher planes with our side in the war would not, if one may presume to imagine their mental attitude, use exactly the phrase that we employ on this plane when we talk of fighting out the war to a finish. But, in effect, that is also the principle with which they are concerned. The great spiritual enemy they combat has not merely to be defeated, but to be exterminated. In so far as it is represented by definite organisations on this planet, those have to be swept off the surface of the world. And so with us, we have not to exterminate the German people—no one who apprehends our duty aright dreams of any such ghastly absurdity; but we have to exterminate the military principle which has misdirected the energies of the German people for the time being into channels marked out for them, however little they are conscious of this, by the

dark powers that are definitely the foes of humanity.

And that is how it comes to pass that for the moment, though for the moment only, the very principle of human brotherhood, as we stand in arms before the misguided forces of the enemy, has to be thought of as in suspense. There is no purpose to serve by blinking the fact. Imagine a British regiment suddenly confronted in the theatre of war by a corresponding force of Germans. Individually those unhappily misled Germans are our human brothers, but, for the moment, the one duty unequivocally imposed upon the British force is to kill them. The whole thing is utterly horrible. The moral horrors of the war are almost as terrible in the imagination as the physical sufferings it gives rise to. But just as these have to be borne by our gallant sufferers in the field, so we have, for the time being, to steel our hearts against the emotions appropriate to a normal period, comprehending that this period is in all respects abnormal; unearned as a period of suffering by the nations enduring it, a ghastly episode in human

history lying outside the divine programme; the evil growth of perverted human will, from which, evil though it may be, divine power and wisdom will ultimately know how to distil beneficent consequences.

Human Brotherhood

I hope this attempt to deal with an extremely intricate thought may not be misunderstood as representing on my part a disposition to quarrel with the fundamental principle of human brotherhood—eternal in its beautiful significance when rightly understood, even though events may seem to challenge it sometimes, and even though, for that matter, at all times it is liable to misapprehension. To apprehend it correctly, we must always keep clearly in view the equally eternal principle of human inequality. Human speech is very often inappropriate to convey subtle thought which has to include ideas emanating from loftier planes than that on which human speech is framed. In a certain extremely subtle sense, that can hardly be put into words, there is a unity connecting not merely

the best representatives of civilised intellect and morals and the humble representatives of ignorance and criminality even, with whom they may share their nationality. To make the contrast even more violent, we may recognise in some almost incomprehensible fashion a unity linking those whom we speak of as the Masters of Wisdom with the humblest savages of Africa or the Australian bush. Such brotherhood as that unity implies undoubtedly imposes duties on the elder brothers in either case and claims from them compassion and sympathy. But this does not necessarily lead on this plane to vapid toleration of iniquity. It may be quite compatible in some cases with severity exercised by the elder over the younger brother, and the obligations of brotherhood must always be interpreted in harmony with the recognition of a great principle that the human family is a vast procession, moving through the ages, the vanguard and the rearguard of which are separated by illimitable stretches of time and condition. And owing to the sublime principle which invests every individual unit of that vast procession in

varying degrees with free will, it is always possible that some will, in effect, detach themselves from the procession, rebelling against the very principle of brotherhood and cutting themselves off from the obligations of that principle by others. There is no brotherhood on higher planes between the powers of good and evil, when we think of them as identified with incarnate representatives. This is how it comes to pass that in presence of the absolutely unprecedented catastrophe in which civilisation is plunged at this awful period, some of the emotions appropriate to normal periods must be regarded as for the time being in suspense.

But only, of course, for the time being. The bitter indignation and disgust with which we contemplate the atrocities perpetrated in France and Belgium by the German armies—feelings indeed which would be far more intense than they are in actuality, if the true facts were more widely known—will disappear in the long run in that happy future when the war shall be over and the fearful influences prevailing with the German armies at present shall have passed away,

exterminated by the powers of good on the higher levels. Then will come a time in which beautiful emotions may once more have free play, and though the strain of what we have been going through may hardly be worn off for years to come, it will be worn off eventually, and some future generations of the German people will look back upon the history of this war as upon an awful nightmare, the origin of which imagination fails to account for. Thus gradually, with the disappearance from a regenerated Europe of the warlike preparations that have oppressed our spirits and burdened us with heavy sacrifices during the last thirty years and more, compensating influences from higher spiritual levels than those we have hitherto been dealing with, to which I referred some time back as in reserve for us in the future, will be operative with more beautiful results on human welfare and emotions than as yet can easily be foreseen.

Killed in Action

But without attempting to define the conditions of life in that future period in any

minute detail, there are some compensating phenomena connected even with the frightful experiences of the present which it is worth while, more than worth while, to keep in view. The sacrifices of life on the fields of battle throw back on the people of the Allied Nations great waves of grief and mourning.

"Those whom they thirst for, though the sound of fame
May for a moment soothe, it cannot slake
The fever of vain longing, and the name
So honoured but assumes a stronger, bitterer claim."

Before sorrow of that sort one can only bow and pass on, but in some degree perhaps it may be relieved by knowing what those who are able to follow the consciousness of the gallant victims mourned for are able to discern as regards their future lives. The penetrating studies we have been able to carry on concerning human experiences beyond the change called death has shown us that in many cases, though by no means in all, some period of comparative discomfort has to be endured before those who pass on, especially in early life with the full intensity

of this life's passions on their consciousness, attain the happier conditions of the higher astral life. Now it would be ridiculous to imagine that every young soldier killed in the war has been living in such a pure and blameless fashion as would normally have brought about his immediate transfer after death to realms of perfect happiness. To be reasonable we must recognise that, in the great majority of cases, young soldiers killed at a period of life when all their thirst for the varied pleasures of this world is necessarily strong would normally endure some period of what I call discomfort—I do not want to emphasise the idea too violently—that would operate as a species of purification, rendering it possible for them ultimately to enjoy happiness in realms where the particular kinds of physical happiness they have been attached to in imagination are no longer available. That, let me say in passing, does not mean that the happiness of such realms is in any way pale or colourless. The reverse of this is true. It is far more vivid and intense than any feeling mere indulgence in physical pleasures can give rise

to on this plane of life. But to elaborate that idea further would involve a protracted essay on astral conditions which would here be out of place. The point I have to emphasise is this, that death on the field of battle in such a war as that which is now in progress, and I am speaking for the moment entirely in reference to our own people, is in more ways than one an abnormal sort of death. We may fairly recognise what is probably the truth, that nearly all those who are combating on our side in this war are inspired with the conviction that they are fighting for the right. They go into battle fully realising that their lives are at stake, and if these are sacrificed, the sacrifice may be thought of as willingly offered up on the altar of right, and such sacrifice has a very definite effect on the after-life of the man who makes it. It sweeps out of his consciousness the lower desires which might otherwise keep him down for a while on those lower levels of the astral world in which purification under normal conditions would more slowly, and subject to conditions of more or less discomfort, be carried out.

For a while, it is true, a man killed in the wild excitement of battle is wrapped in a confusion of thought which precludes him from realising that he has actually passed on to another condition of being. But that period of wild excitement need not be thought of as distressing, and in any case it is one from which multitudes of eager astral philanthropists are engaged in liberating those subject to it. And then they pass at once to the happier conditions of the higher astral region. The loss they have incurred proves indeed to have been a gain. There may be cases in which the victims of the war of whom I am thinking would be willing to sacrifice their new found happiness for the sake of consoling those who are grieving for them if they could return. But if they did so, I believe in every case they would feel that they were making a sacrifice for the sake of their beloved ones, never recovering a life which they would, from that higher point of view, regard as worth recovery. It has been my privilege in various ways to have touch with a great many people who have passed across the wonderful thresh-

old, and I may say without equivocation that I have never met one who wished to be back again in the body.

Vengeance is Mine

Of course the conditions of the astral world at this moment are no less abnormal and bewildering than those which reign over us here. With bewildered souls pouring into it in tens of thousands in excess of the normal inflow, one can well imagine that the government of those regions is a task of even greater complexity than, for that matter, it must be always. For we have to remember that even though the favourable conditions I have just been describing may be operative with some even amongst those fighting unconsciously for the wrong, when in the individual confusion of their thought they may imagine themselves fighting for the right, it is terribly true, of course, that some of those who have been fighting on the German side—and thus unconsciously perhaps serving the powers of evil—may have made themselves individually responsible for the terrible cruelties which undoubtedly

have been perpetrated in large numbers of cases, and may thus have to undergo experiences widely unlike those I have just been dealing with. It is necessary to include this idea in our thinking, if only for the sake of avoiding the mistaken conception that it will become the duty of our troops, if they have the opportunity, to revenge the cruelties perpetrated against the Belgians on the nation held to be responsible. It would not only be un-Christian to think of such vicarious revenge, it would be foolishly unmindful of the fact that Nature can deal with the real criminals in these cases in a way which no human justice could possibly emulate. All who have profited in any way by recent revelations concerning superphysical conditions of life hidden from physical sight, will be aware that quite independently of those astral regions which have what I have described above as a purifying effect for those whose characteristics obliged them to pass through them, there are deeper conditions of astral suffering appropriate to those guilty in this life of the one great, almost unpardonable, sin—cruelty.

There is something highly reasonable and logical in this idea if it is properly understood. Cruelty on the physical plane is the exact opposite of those characteristics which may infuse even physical life with a divine attribute, love, kindliness, and sympathy. And just as these last characteristics lead the soul infused with them to lofty conditions of happiness, so the perpetration of physical cruelty in this life drives down the author thereof to conditions of misery, the intensity of which imagination can hardly realise. Even if we could catch the actual perpetrators of some amongst the most horrible cruelties that have been perpetrated on women and children in Belgium, no punishment that human power could inflict would be comparable in their intensity with those developed by natural law as the consequence of such action. But I need not follow this painful line of thought much further. It is only important as emphasising—what the dignity, let us trust, of our own national character would enforce, even without any knowledge of hidden mysteries—the principle, namely, that vengeance may

be left to a higher power than that which we can exert on the physical plane of life.

The Triumph of Right

There will be a joyous termination to all these horrors. As most of us feel confident, without in all cases understanding exactly how it comes to pass, the powers of good in this mighty struggle are certainly destined to triumph over the dark powers of evil. So destined because, even if what may be called the normal spiritual hierarchy presiding over this world is not much more than equally matched against the forces with which they are contending, there are powers still in the spiritual background which will reinforce them in supreme emergencies and render their ultimate defeat impossible, a condition of things involving the certainty that they will ultimately prove victorious. For those who realise this most fully, it may sometimes seem bewildering and strange that supreme divine power does not sweep down on this disordered planet and in one mighty effort put an end to the struggle going on. But for reasons which

one can only dimly guess at, it seems to be a supreme law that within the limits of our capacity we have to do all we can ourselves for the vindication of the great principles on behalf of which we are warring. And so with the powers above. Divine intervention, transcending even the resources of the normal spiritual hierarchy presiding over this world's evolution, is only brought to bear in supreme emergencies, but for the supreme emergencies it is always in reserve. And so also on the humbler planes of actual worldly warfare, the nations resisting the great attack are left to carry on the struggle by their own might and at their own cost, except again in the supreme emergencies. In these, when they have actually arisen in the case of fighting during the last few months, there has been intervention of invisible power from higher realms. Again, according to the law prevailing on high, our spiritual protectors must not join in the struggle in any coarse and obvious fashion. They must not employ the mighty forces they can wield to kill off aggressive hosts of the enemy. But for protective purposes on

our behalf in emergencies they may, and they do, intervene to an extent which physical observation cannot cognise. Few of us are in a position quite to understand the nature of the protection they afford. Even faintly to understand this, we have to recognise strange forces of which our own science is as yet unacquainted. But without presuming to investigate the details of their application, we may be, we ought to be, exhilarated by the thought that we are supported in the mighty war we are waging by all those towards whom the students of occultism during the revelations of the last thirty years have been looking up with enthusiasm and reverence. There are in connection with this war mightier alliances than those represented by the nations in arms. The unseen allies of our physical-plane enemy may indeed be formidable, but our trust in the alliance we are privileged to feel sure of ourselves is calculated not merely to banish all fear of the future, but to invest us during our time of trial with a spiritual exhilaration, the dignity of which cannot be surpassed.

If it were not for the comprehension of this we might be tempted to cry out with King Arthur (as Tennyson interprets him):

"... why is all around us here
As if some lesser God had made the world,
But had not force to shape it how he would?"

Our knowledge enables us to add the words which follow:

"Till the high God behold it from above
And enter it and make it beautiful."

APPENDIX

THE report of the French Commission appointed to investigate the acts committed by the enemy "en violation du droit des gens" was published in the *Journal Officiel* of January the 8th. The Commission consisted of MM. Georges Payelle, premier président de la cour des comptes; Armand Mollard, ministre plénipotentiaire: Georges Maringer, conseiller d'état; and Edmond Paillot, conseiller à la cour de cassation. The brief introduction to the report explains that it deals merely with cases "irréfragablement établis." In the regions the Commissioners traversed, they say, especially in Lorraine, "les misères affreuses dont nous avons été les témoins dépassent en étendu et en horreur ce que l'imagination peut concevoir . . . les attentats contre les femmes et les jeunes filles ont été d'une fréquence inouïe."

APPENDIX

The length to which the original report extends (it would fill about twenty columns of the *Times*) embarrasses me in attempting to deal with it. The Paris correspondent of the *Times*, endeavouring to summarise it on its first appearance, writes: "Rape, with every refinement of cruelty and bestiality, marked the passage of the Huns with ghastly frequency. . . . The stories of rape are so horrible in detail that their publication would seem almost impossible were it not for the necessity of showing to the fullest extent the nature of the wild beasts fighting under the German flag for German ideals and civilisation." As an illustration of the miscellaneous cruelties (not directly connected with outrages on women) which the report chronicles, the correspondent quotes the following case:—

"At Gerbéviller 20 out of 475 houses remain habitable, and 100 persons have disappeared. Some were taken to the fields and executed, others were assassinated in their homes, or shot down as they fled from the flames. Here two of the most horrible

crimes of the whole series were committed. The Germans entered a house, took away the thirty-six-year-old son, who was wearing a Red Cross *brassard*, tied his hands behind his back, shot him in the street, and then returned and fetched his seventy-year-old father and mother. They saw their son stretched on the ground. As the body still moved, the Germans poured petrol upon it and set it alight in the presence of the terrified mother."

Most of the cases dealt with in the report have to do with horrors of this order, but a very large proportion with outrages on women. I quote a few examples of these, taken almost at random from scores of similar records, availing myself of a full translation published as a pamphlet by the *Daily Chronicle*.

One case of the kind, described in the report as proved beyond doubt amongst many others reported, took place at Coulommiers. The name of the woman outraged is suppressed.

"At St Denis-les-Rebais, on the 7th September, a Uhlan raped Madame X. while her

mother-in-law, powerless to intervene, endeavoured to keep her grandson, eight years old, from this revolting sight.

"On the same day, at the hamlet of Marais in the Commune of Jouy-sur-Morin, the three daughters of Madame X., aged respectively eighteen, fifteen, and thirteen, were with their sick mother when two German soldiers entered, seized the eldest, dragged her into the next room, and raped her in succession; while one committed his crime, the other watched the door and with his weapons kept back the half-maddened mother."

Incidents of this order have been almost innumerable, even in the limited region of France to which the French report relates; but it seems to have been chiefly in Belgium that similar outrages have been aggravated by bloodthirsty cruelty.

The monthly periodical called *Nash's and Pall Mall Magazine* published in the November number an article by Mr Scotland Liddle entitled "Germany's Carnival of Cruelty." Mr Liddle had gone to Belgium especially to investigate and verify "some of the reported atrocities of the German

soldiery." I proceed to quote some passages from his terrible narrative:—

"At the village of Corbeck Loo, near Louvain, a young woman (she was twenty-two), whose husband had gone off to join the army, was captured by a band of German soldiers. The folks she was with were locked up in an empty house while she was taken into another building and raped successively by five soldiers. . . .

"I know that there were three baby children between the years of three and five who were playing with tiny Belgian flags by the wayside between Brussels and Louvain, and I know that these innocent tots were waving their little flags as children would, and I know that some German cavalry who came along that way rode amongst them and pierced their sweet white breasts with accursed spears. And I know that the poor old grandmother of the children clattered out of her little cottage at the sound of the troops, and I know that the bloody spears killed her also. . . .

"In Belgium to-day there are men and women who have gone stark mad with the

shuddering horror of the sights they have seen. There are half-witted peasants who wander aimlessly among the blackened ruins of their burnt-out villages, falling to their knees on the approach of the mildest stranger and screaming out prayers for mercy. I have come suddenly upon such scenes. They are living nightmares, and I shall remember them always. . . .

"The Germans, you must know, do not do things by halves. . . . It was not enough at Corbeck Loo that a school-girl should have been forced to drink wine by a number of German soldiers. It was not enough that she should have been successively raped by these incarnate devils on the lawn in front of her home. It was not enough that her poor breasts should have been pierced with their bayonets because she struggled with her seducers. God in Heaven, no! The Germans do not do things by halves. They left out nothing. They held the girl's father and mother all the time so that they should writhe under the agony of witnessing the proceedings. . . .

"One of the most heartrending of all the

wanton cruelties of the Germans is the case of old mother Deppe of Namur. Her husband, a feeble old fellow, was shot dead in his chair at his fireside, and the old woman was asked to step outside by a Uhlan officer. 'I congratulate you on your escape from death,' said the officer in bad French. He smilingly held out his hand, and old mother Deppe tremblingly extended her own right hand, which the officer grasped and held as he motioned to one of his soldiers, who, with a quick thrust of his sabre, cut off the woman's hand at the wrist. She was left bleeding to death on her own doorstep."

Since the appearance of the magazine article Mr Liddle has brought out a substantial book entitled *The Track of the War*, in which he reproduces the original article and adds a great volume of other experience gathered during his stay as a correspondent in Belgium.

I have not seen any complete report by the Belgian Commission investigating atrocities, but preliminary reports published at Antwerp are translated in the *Daily Chronicle Blackbook of the War*. Again the enormous

volume of evidence makes it unmanageable in a necessarily brief summary like this I am attempting. Mr Orts, one of the secretaries of the Commission, says in reference to Aerschot: "The murders, looting, rapes, attacks on persons and their goods" that prevailed throughout the German occupation "ceased only when the Belgian forces entered Aerschot."

One of the preliminary reports deals with the wholesale massacres which marked the progress of the German army across the province of Belgian Luxembourg during the months of August and September.

The number of men (civilians) shot in the whole province is over 1000. The following figures relate to certain villages only:—

Neufchâteau . . .	18 shot.
Etalle	30 shot.
Houdemont . . .	11 shot.
Tintigny. . . .	157 shot.
Izele	10 shot.
Rossignol . . .	106 shot.
Bertrix	21 shot.
Ethe	About 300 persons shot. 530 in all missing.
Latour	Only 17 men surviving in the village.

St Léger	11 shot.
Maissin	10 men, 1 woman, and 1 young girl shot; 2 men and 2 women wounded.
Villance	2 men shot; 1 young girl wounded.
Anloy	52 men and women shot.
Claireuse	2 men shot; 2 men hung.

About 111 persons of the Communes of Ethe and Rossignol were publicly shot at Arlon. Some days later eight persons from neighbouring Communes were executed there.

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